

Union Works
(Rosen Mill)
Spruce and Market Streets
Paterson, New Jersey
Passaic County

HAER No. NJ-13

HAER
NJ,
16-PAT,
23-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

UNION WORKS (ROSEN MILL)

NJ-13

HAER
118,
16-PAT,
23-

Date: 1813-1815

Location: Spruce and Market Streets
Paterson, New Jersey

Designed by: Unknown.

Owner: Reconstruction Finance Corp.

Significance: The Union Works buildings is one of the older mill sites in Paterson, having housed Aaron King's facility before King built the "Stone Mill." In the first half of the nineteenth century, the mill housed spinning mills, a button factory, and various other enterprises in addition to being the site of the first silk processing machinery manufactory in the city.

Transmitted by: Monica E. Hawley, Historian, 1983.

The UNION WORKS (Rosen Mill)

The following is the result of a deed search done at the time of the survey:

"Beginning for the same on the North side of Congress Street (now Market Street) as now laid, at the Southwesterly corner of mill lot No. 7 owned by one Lorillard, and running thence (1) Northerly 170 feet along the West side of Lorillard lot to the wall of the present middle canal on the North side of said lot; thence (2) Westerly along the wall of said canal 63 feet to the East side of Spruce Street; thence (3) Southerly along the East side of Spruce Street 170 feet more or less to the corner of Congress Street; thence (4) Easterly along the North side of Congress Street 57 feet to the place of beginning."

The first occupant of the Union Works lot is thought to be Aaron King, who is reputed to have occupied the site before he built the "Stone Mill", between 1813 and 1815.¹

The earliest recorded transaction involving the Union Works was the deed of sale, dated 1831, in which the S.U.M. sold the mill lot to Roswell Colt for \$6,000.² Sometime around this date, a button factory was established on the site, for in his 1832 census, Fisher records a "guilt (sic) Button factory" on the middle tier, with the comment,

"Buttons manufactured at this establishment as it respects superior workmanship and elegance of finish, are not surpassed by any guilt buttons imported from Europe."

The factory employed 20 hands, and produced 9,000 gross buttons per annum, with an average value of \$45.50 a gross.³ Either begun by Blackington & Company, or acquired by them, the button factory is labelled "Blackington Button Factory" on an 1835 map of the mill district.

In 1837, Colt leased the mill lot to William Beggs, a machinist,⁴ who was seeking to rebuild after a fire had gutted the Paul and Beggs machine shop across Spruce Street.⁵ Three years later, E. Boudinot Atterbury, a cotton manufacturer, moved on to the lot, and whether Paul and Beggs left the Union Works at that time or later is not clear. They may have been replaced by the firm of Evans and Thomson, who established a machine shop, a moulding shop and foundry on the Union lot around 1850-51.⁶ Their factory was the first in Paterson to manufacture silk processing machinery, anticipating and predating the importance of silk manufacturing in Paterson later in that century.

After Beggs' lease on the property had expired, the plot was leased by General Thomas D. Hoxsey in 1858.⁷ Hoxsey entered the cotton business, and by 1859, had sixty employees attending 3,000 spindles, and working 7,000 lbs. of cotton a week into twine, wicks, warps, and cloth.⁸

By the lease agreement, Hoxsey was to pay the rent up to February 1862. Apparently his cotton manufactory was less than successful, for in February of 1862, the lease was immediately assigned to Henry M. Low, who used Hoxsey's machinery to process cotton.⁹

In 1864, John Booth, Alfred Hobley and Stephen Van Winkle took over the lease from Henry Low.¹⁰ Van Winkle had started weaving silk in the Van Winkle shop of the Phoenix Mill in 1859, and had subsequently moved to the Beaver Mill. Instigated by a growing business, and new influx of capital from his new partners, Van Winkle took over the entire mill. By 1881, the plant was producing 400 lbs. of tram, 250 lbs. of organzine, seventy-five lbs. of floss and 150 lbs. of sewings weekly with 2,000 spindles and ninety to one hundred hands.¹¹ With Hobley's retirement from the firm in 1879,¹² and Booth's death in 1886,¹³ Van Winkle was sole surviving partner when the property was assigned to the J.H. Booth Manufacturing Company, Inc., in 1888.¹⁴

One year later, the company assigned the lease to William T. Ryle,¹⁵ son of the pioneer Paterson silk manufacturer John Ryle. Arthur Ryle and Bolthius Murphy joined him as partners in 1890, and were appropriately assigned portions of the lease.¹⁶ They later sold the lease to the Century Realty Company in 1901, with all equipment as recorded on Book E-14, p. 421 in the Passaic Deeds.¹⁷

Century sold the lease fifteen years later to Max and Jacob Rosen.¹⁸ In the same year, 1916, a descendant of Roswell Colt and his wife sold six sixteenths of the property to the N.J. General Security Company,¹⁹ which sold this share to the SUM in 1931.²⁰ The remaining ten sixteenths of the property remained in the hands of the trust officers of the Bank of New York, as per the will of another Colt heir.

The Rosen brothers incorporated their silk ribbon manufacturing company under the title of J. Rosen and Sons, Inc., in 1937, to which they assigned the lease for the property.²¹ After the Rosens defaulted on several mortgages issued by the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, the mill was seized and sold at auction to the highest bidder; the Reconstruction Finance Corporation with a bid of \$20,000 in 1943.²²

Footnotes: The Union Works

1. Trumbull p. 57.
2. Abstract, p. 3.
3. Fisher, 1832 Census.
4. Passaic Deeds, D 42.
5. Trumbull 57.
6. Ibid. 80.
7. Passaic Deeds C-2, 630.
8. Sci. Am. 1859, p. 315.
9. Passaic Deeds C-2, 630.
10. Passaic book C misc. 62.
11. Trumbull 229.
12. Passaic Deeds: G-6 455.
13. Passaic Deeds: K 492
14. Passaic Deeds: V-8, 369.
15. Passaic Deeds: P-9, 544.
16. Passaic Deeds: D-10, 395.
17. Passaic Deeds: Z-14, 548.
18. Passaic Deeds: O-25, 492.
19. Passaic Deeds: U-25, 96; 100.
E-26, 272
G-26, 355.
20. Passaic Deeds: E-36, 390.
21. Passaic Deeds: M-40, 207.
22. Passaic Deeds: U-43, 472.